



News Release

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Navy Launches Meteorological-Oceanographic Satellite



The U.S. Navy's GeoSat Follow-On METOC satellite is launched atop a Taurus launch vehicle from Vandenberg AFB at 5:20 a.m. Tuesday, February 10th. *US Air Force photo courtesy 30th Space Wing.*

SAN DIEGO -- A combined military and commercial space team launched the Navy's GeoSat Follow-On (GFO) meteorological-oceanographic satellite at 5:20 a.m. Tuesday February 10th from Vandenberg AFB atop an Orbital Sciences Corporation Taurus launch vehicle.

Liftoff of the Taurus rocket lit the pre-dawn sky as it streaked out over the Pacific Ocean. The Navy's GeoSat radar altimeter will provide real-time altimetry data to the forward-deployed tactical decision makers for the first time. "The Navy is forward deployed to meet our nation's interest. The data from GeoSat will help keep our warfighters safe and ensure their effectiveness," according to Rear Admiral Kenneth Barbor, Commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command. "We need to understand the oceans and the atmosphere to help the warfighters do their job, and this satellite will allow us to characterize the oceans with a high degree of fidelity," he added.

All GeoSat Follow-On payload data will be provided on an encrypted, continuously operating tactical downlink to AN/SMQ-11 Tactical Terminal-equipped Navy ships and facilities. The Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command's Naval Oceanographic Office at the Stennis Space Center near Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, will process GFO data at their Payload Operations Center. The Naval Meteorology and Oceanography

Command collects, interprets and applies global data and information for safety at sea, strategic and tactical warfare, and weapons system design, development and deployment. The command provides meteorological, oceanographic, and mapping, charting and geodesy services to increase the effectiveness of our Naval forces in both peacetime and in war.

The GFO mission will support US Navy, NOAA, NASA, and University ocean science and ocean monitoring. Additionally, the GFO radar altimeter will assist meteorologists in mapping the progression of El Niño. The Navy's previous GeoSat altimeter was the only satellite to capture the sea level changes associated with the 1987 El Niño. A GFO fact sheet is available on the World Wide Web at www.spawar.navy.mil



Artist depiction of the GeoSat Follow-On in orbit. Image courtesy Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp.

The San Diego-based Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command Meteorological and Oceanographic Systems Program Office is responsible for the acquisition and launch of the GeoSat Follow-On satellite (commonly referred to as GFO). The Air Force's 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg Air Force Base in Santa Barbara County operates the Western Range over vast areas of the Pacific Ocean. Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. (BATC) is the prime contractor for the GeoSat Follow-On satellite.

The Third Naval Construction Brigade from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and the First Naval Construction Regiment from Port Hueneme, Calif., refurbished the Taurus launch site -- 576-East -- at Vandenberg, according to HM1 Kevin Louis Miller, US Naval Reserve. The First Naval Construction Regiment is a selected reserve unit with members from throughout Southern California. The construction battalion modernized the site by re-grading old roads, re-opening and refurbishing abandoned control stations, pouring concrete for cable encasements, power transfer pads and blast walls. They left behind a more modern mobile launch control facility, numerous remote control capabilities, camera observation towers and a state-of-the-art network of telecommunication, high voltage and fiber optic cables for this and future launches.

The GFO satellite is undergoing on-orbit checkout by the Navy and BATC. The Naval Satellite Operations Center at Pt. Mugu, California is communicating with the satellite from both the Prospect Harbor, Maine and Laguna Peak, California earth stations. Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. engineers are working with the NAVSOC during the on-orbit checkout to transition the satellite into the proper configuration for operational use.

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